

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 - 14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently amended) A method for inducing the activation and proliferation of natural killer (NK) cells, comprising:

contacting the a human cell population comprising NK cells and monocytic dendritic precursor cells with a dendritic cell that can induce the activation and proliferation of NK cells; an effective amount of granulocyte-monocyte colony stimulating factor (GM-CSF) and interleukin 15 (IL-15) to form immature dendritic cells; and

contacting the cell population comprising the NK cells and the immature dendritic cells with an effective amount of a dendritic cell maturation agent under conditions suitable for maturation of the dendritic cell, such that the mature dendritic cell induces the activation and proliferation of the NK cells in the cell population.

16. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the mature dendritic cell is characterized by the expression of increased levels of CD80, and CD86 as compared to a mature dendritic cell cultured in the presence of granulocyte-macrophage colony stimulating factor (GM-CSF) and interleukin 4 (IL-4).

17. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the mature dendritic cell is characterized by the expression of an increased level of CD1a on the surface of the cell as compared to a dendritic cell cultured in the presence of GM-CSF and IL-4.

18. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the mature dendritic cells ~~are~~ is characterized by the expression of interleukin 12 (IL-12), tumor necrosis factor α (TNF α), and GM-CSF.

19. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the NK cells and the dendritic cell are contacted ~~*in vivo*~~, *ex vivo*, or *in vitro*.

20. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the cell population is further contacted with additional NK cells that are substantially isolated.

21. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the cell population is further contacted with additional NK cells are provided as a population of leukocytes.

22. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 21, wherein the population of leukocytes are further contacted with a population of antigen presenting dendritic cells.

23. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein the cell NK cells are further contacted with an effective amount of a desired antigen.